

IMPROVED SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D.
Editor, Christian Science Monitor
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Lesson for May 30

Lesson subjects and Scripture texts assigned and approved by International Council of Religious Education, used by permission.

PETER'S COUNSEL TO SCATTERED CHRISTIANS

LESSON TEXT: 1 Peter 1:1-12:13
GOLDEN TEXT: Love all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King. 1 Peter 2:17

Persecution for Christ's sake has been the lot of believers from the first century down to 1933. Sometimes it has been official, but more often unofficial, yet nonetheless severe and trying.

The manner in which Christians face their difficulties is one of the best testimony to the reality of their faith. Sometimes, however, in the midst of their trials the enemy of their souls long to discourage, convert, and then they need the counsel and encouragement of others.

Such was the situation when Peter addressed his first epistle to the early believers who were scattered abroad (1:1). His counsel was just what they needed, and is equally helpful to us today.

I. Separated As Pilgrims (1:1-12:13)

Christians are in this world but not of it. They are passing through, wayfarers on their way to the eternal dwelling place of God. That does not mean that they are not interested in the world, but that they are not about them, or deluged in sharing the responsibilities of life, but it does mean that they are to be the pilgrims' detachment from the things of the world and the flesh.

In the days of Peter, membership in the church was not considered a normal or respectable thing. It marked a person as belonging to a hated sect, one which was falsely accused of many evil deeds. For example, Christians met at night, men and women together for communion service. Because they spoke of this as a "love feast," they were accused of immorality, and because they spoke of the body and blood of Christ they were said to be eaters of human flesh.

Christians must meet such malicious reports. How? By silencing their accusers by their good works.

II. Submissive As Citizens (2:13-16)

One of the hallmarks of Christian character is willing and gracious recognition of proper authority, whether it be in the state, in the place of employment, in the school, or in the church. He does this for the Lord's sake (v. 13), and even when that authority is in the hands of an unreasonable man.

This does not mean that the Christian is to encourage or countenance tyranny and oppression, but that he is loyal to the state and to his employer, even though the present representative be a hard, unjust man. In all well ordered society there will be greater effective means to correct injustice. But in and through it all the Christian shows his faith by his behavior.

Observe that government, in the plan of God, is for the purpose of keeping order, encouraging the good, and punishing the evil (v. 14). The powerful influence of the Christian Church should keep it in that right channel, or bring it back if it has strayed. Always loyal and obedient, the believer should show his faith and his personal influence to establish and support good government.

III. Suffering As Christians (2:19-25)

Christ is our "example" (v. 21). Since some have interpreted this word and the statement "that ye should follow in his steps" as indicating that we are saved by our imitation of Christ, it is well to point out that this would be quite impossible. We would have to begin where He began—He was without sin (v. 22). But we have all "sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We need a Saviour—not an example as far as redemption is concerned.

In the ever present problem of suffering, we as redeemed ones do have Christ as our example. He who was sinless and without fault bore the shame and suffering of Calvary without complaint. He was reviled. He did not retaliate, when He was hurt. He did not threaten revenge (v. 23), but was willing to leave the ultimate judgment in the hands of God, who will have the final word.

We ought to do the same when we suffer for Christ's sake. If we suffer because of our own sin or folly, we can claim no credit for bearing it patiently (v. 20). But when we are persecuted, we have opportunity to show whether our profession of being followers of Christ really means anything. At this point some Christians lose their testimony and influence by a bitter, vengeful spirit.

These are trying days for the souls of men. In many parts of the world Christians are forced to drink the bitter cup of persecution. To the glory of God we record the fact that they are doing it heroically and in a true Christian spirit.



"YOUR OFFICE STILL THINKS IT NEEDS YOU MORE THAN THE VICTORY DROP COORS NEEDS YOU MR. UPRIGHT"

Rocks News

Rocks, May 24: Everything is new and green now since the fine rain.

Mrs. Percy Carter spent a week-end recently in Roanoke with her husband, Mr. Percy Carter.

Mrs. Maude Ranson, Mrs. Rhymy

Wilson and Mrs. Percy Carter went to Lynchburg Friday.

Mrs. L. K. Almond, Mrs. O'S Ranson and daughter, Charlene, left Tuesday with Mrs. Walter Ranson.

Mrs. P. H. McPhillips and daughter, Margaret Ann, and Miss Cassie Baldwin were visiting Mrs. Sherman Garlinghouse and daughter, Janet, Tuesday afternoon.

Mrs. Maude Ranson, Mrs. Rhymy

Mrs. C. M. Evans called to see her mother, Mrs. Claude Ranson Tuesday.

A. E. Anderson was helping Jim Frank Ranson bed up tobacco land Wednesday.

Mrs. Claude Ranson spent a few days at Appomattox last week. Melvin Garrett and Ernest Justice, of Newport News spent the week-end with the former's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Garrett.

Dr. Walker Goin, of Newport News spent Friday night with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. Y. Goin.

Mrs. D. R. Inge went to Richmond Sunday to see her brother, Wilson Par' 's, who is in a hospital there.

Mrs. A. W. Jones and son, Sonny, left for Chester, Pa. Wednesday morning, after a two week's visit with her mother, Mrs. S. Garlinghouse.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ranson, and children, of Pamplin, Mr. and Mrs. Wilton Almond and children, of Lynchburg, spent Sunday with Mrs. L. K. Almond, of Pamplin.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Roach and children spent Sunday with A. A. Lavin and family.

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Garrett and family went to Evergreen Sunday morning to visit Rev. A. C. Lawson.

Willy Ranson went to Appomattox several times last week to see his father, who is very ill.

C. S. Ranson, of Petersburg, spent the week-end at his home here.

Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Ranson called to see Mr. and Mrs. Jim Franz Ranson Sunday.

Mrs. E. S. Roach called to see Mrs. A. J. Anderson on Thursday.

Mrs. C. M. Evans called to see her mother, Mrs. Claude Ranson Tuesday.

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